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HOW SHALL WE SPREAD IDEALISM ?

The word "idealism" may be put to various uses. We use it in no strict philosophical sense, but as expressing those finer qualities of life which are included in religion and morality. Righteousness, the sense of unity in the universe, faith in God, sacrificial love—these, as well as kindred spiritual realities, are all to be seen in what it represents. It is the opposite, not of matter, but of materialism. For its servants it has education and art, but it is not to be confounded with any civilization.

To the spread of such high values every generous soul may be expected to be devoted. Without such ambition the noblest life grows selfish and skeptical. But upon what shall we rely to spread idealism ?



There are those who put their reliance upon force. Noble sentiments are made to excuse ignoble deeds. Civilization runs like a fatal disease among primitive peoples, and prophets rely upon cannon to guarantee the word of the Lord.

Such idealism too often serves as a cover for relentless economic policies. The wolf of commercial profit masquerades in the sheep's clothing of schools and churches. What nation ever fought an aggressive war or armed itself except to insure peace? What international policy every sought to coerce or dismember a weak nation except for the sake of human betterment? What Christian nation has not justified war, rapine, and slave hunts in the name of furthering the Christian religion?

Honor, justice, fraternity—these, we are told, are not to be trusted in national relations beyond our ability to defend them by force. Education, ideals, the fruits of "civilization"—these, we

are told, are to be spread abroad over the earth by the bayonets of nations who incidentally take toll of land, people, and taxes.



It would be a mistake to call such flagrant inconsistencies hypocrisy. They are rather evidence that idealists are blind to their own ideals. Philosophical generalities have not yet been transmuted into Christian morality. Men bravely draw the sword to defend their Master, but have not heard his rebuke or seen his healing of the wounds they make.



Spiritual values must be sought in spiritual ways. Moral ideals cannot be forced upon the world any more than you can make a child love you by beating it. If we really believe in the supremacy of Christian ideals, we must rely upon Christian methods to make them universal. That was the method of Jesus. And that method alone can give permanent blessings to a world of violence.



That brings us face to face with the Cross; and no man longs for sacrifice. We prefer demanding our rights to granting others justice. The Ten Commandments do not reach the limits of Christian ethics. We are not thoroughly the disciples of Jesus until we believe that the world can be made Christian in Christ's way. We must be brave enough and strong enough to teach ourselves and our age the power of an invincible good will.

We cannot prod ideals into humanity by bayonets, but unless the very heart of our Christian faith is delusion, we can bear them to the world upon a Cross.